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Struggle from 1970 to now

National Day of Mourning

By K. James

What are the United States' foundational myths? Who created them, and who do they erase and harm?

For the past 51 years, United American Indians of New England (UAINE) and supporters have gathered on so-called Thanksgiving Day in Plymouth, Massachusetts, to ask these questions, confront settler mythologies and commemorate a National Day of Mourning for the Indigenous people murdered by settler colonialism and imperialism worldwide.

Plymouth, Mass., November 2019. WW PHOTO: RACHEL JONES

The National Day of Mourning protest was founded by Wamsutta Frank James, an Aquinnah Wampanoag tribal member. In 1970, Wamsutta had been invited by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to give a speech at a banquet commemorating the 350th anniversary of the arrival of the Pilgrims. The organizers of the banquet imagined that Wamsutta would give an appreciative and complimentary speech, singing the praises of the American settler-colonial project and thanking the Pilgrims for bringing "civilization" to the Wampanoag.

However, the speech that Wamsutta wrote, which was based on historical fact instead of the hollow fiction portrayed in the Thanksgiving myth, was a far cry from complimentary.

The pride and power of Wamsutta Frank James

In his speech, Wamsutta not only named atrocities committed by the Pilgrims, but also reflected upon the fate of the Wampanoag at the hands of settlers. The speech contained a powerful message of Native American pride. "Our spirit refuses to die," wrote Wamsutta. "Yesterday we walked the woodland paths and sandy trails. Today we must walk the macadam highways and roads. We are uniting. ... We stand tall and proud; and before too many moons pass, we'll right the wrongs we have allowed to happen to us."

When state officials saw an advance copy of Wamsutta's speech, they refused to allow him to deliver it, saying that the speech was too "inflammatory."

The speech contained a revolutionary spirit, clearly inspired by the fledgling "Red Power Movement," which demanded equal rights and self-determination for Native Americans. This without a doubt frightened the state officials, whose minds were likely drawn to the 1969 Occupation of Alcatraz, a 19-month-long protest involving Native Americans and supporters taking over the abandoned federal penitentiary on Alcatraz Island in California. The Occupation of Alcatraz was the first intertribal protest that garnered national attention, and it had struck fear into the hearts of the ruling class, because it was becoming clear that Native Americans, like African Americans and other oppressed peoples, were saying "no more."

Attempted suppression of defiant speech

Clinging to the Thanksgiving mythology, the state officials told Wamsutta that they would write a more "appropriate" speech for the banquet, but he refused to have words put into his mouth. His suppressed speech was printed in newspapers across the country, and Wamsutta decided that something had to be done to ensure that the truth about the Pilgrims was still heard. He and other local Native activists began to plan a protest.

The flyer for this protest, which was circulated among Native people nationwide, read, "What do we have to be thankful for? The United American Indians of New England have declared Thanksgiving Day to be a National Day of Mourning for Native Americans."

First National Day of Mourning

Members of the American Indian Movement (AIM), such as Russell Means and Dennis Banks, as well as Native people from all over the country, traveled to Plymouth, Massachusetts, for the very first National Day of Mourning. On Nov. 27, 1970, a crowd of around 200 Native Americans and supporters gathered on Cole's Hill in Plymouth. Native American leaders made speeches about the deplorable conditions Native Americans faced, the genocidal actions of the United States government and the devastation caused by the Pilgrims.

The group next went down to the waterfront, where they buried Plymouth Rock in sand and painted it red. A small group of protesters made their way to the Mayflower II, a replica of the original Mayflower, and

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New York City, Nov. 15. WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

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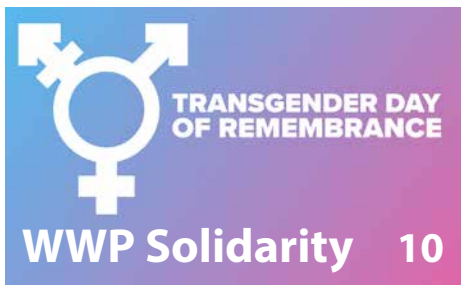

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Honor Day of Mourning– Support Workers World

Workers World honors Indigenous peoples on their commemoration of the 52nd National Day of Mourning on Nov. 25, on so-called "Thanksgiving." On that special day, Native people pay homage to their ancestors and tell their true history as the original inhabitants of this country, while exposing European colonialists' massive crimes against Indigenous people, including theft of their lands and foods, obliteration of their culture, and racism, oppression and genocide.

In 1970, United American Indians of New England gathered in Plymouth, Mass., site of the original "Pilgrim" invasion, and observed the first National Day of Mourning. Only Indigenous people spoke then, and this is still true.*

WW PHOTO: MAIREAD SKEHAN GILLIS

The 51st National Day of Mourning, Nov. 26, 2020, Plymouth, Mass.

Workers World has attended the Day of Mourning commemorations every year since 1981 and has reported first-hand on these events on our pages.

WW applauds Indigenous peoples in the U.S. and globally who fight oppression and lead struggles to save lands, forests and rivers from capitalist destruction. Our newspaper hails courageous Native water, land and forest protectors who lead these movements, often putting their lives on the line to confront rapacious corporations, which, in their reckless drive for profits, harm the planet.

We especially honor those who have lost their lives in these struggles, including Indigenous organizer and Lenca leader, Berta Caceres, of Honduras.

WW has continually supported Native peoples' struggles on the lands, in the streets and in our newspaper. We call on our readers and supporters to support these movements and join in the commemoration of the National Day of Mourning.

Your help is needed!

The WW Supporter Program was founded 44 years ago to help build this socialist newspaper. Since the early 1990s, it has supported workers.org, the website where new WW articles are posted daily, and each week's full issue is displayed in a pdf document. The newspaper is printed and mailed out monthly.

For annual donations of $60, $120 or $300, members receive a year's subscription, letters about timely issues and gift subscriptions. Supporters can receive the book, "What road to socialism?" (Notify us.) Or read it at workers.org/books.

Write and mail monthly or annual checks to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10011. (Include your name and address.) Or donate at workers.org.

**For more history and information, read "National Day of Mourning: The truth about the Pilgrims' invasion and 400+ years of genocide that followed" in the Nov. 28, 2019 issue of WW newspaper at workers.org.*

MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

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MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

Join us in the fight for socialism!

Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it's the only way forward!

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ2S+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people's movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge — the capitalist system.

WWP fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs.

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you're interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. ❐

If you are interested in joining Workers World Party contact: 212.627.2994

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ACT UP Boston charges city with mass violations of human rights

ACT UP Boston at City Hall, Nov. 5. WW PHOTO: MAUREEN SKEHAN

By Æzra EL
Boston

On Nov. 5, ACT UP Boston, labor leaders, frontline harm reductionists, housing advocates, contingents of students, folks who have been houseless and people who use drugs converged on City Hall for a protest press conference and speak-out. Days earlier, city officials began waging their "sheriff's plan," setting up kangaroo courts, trashing tents and jailing people who had been living in a large encampment in the city's Newmarket neighborhood.

For weeks prior, corporate media spun the city's planned attack of jailings, theft of personal property and shelter destruction with daily breaking news of so-called "humanitarian intervention" and a "path to treatment." Sensational headlines were scripted by Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker's "Mass & Cass Task Force," which includes police, prosecutors, city officials and corporate and nonprofit CEOs, drowning out medical professionals and legal experts who cautioned that death is often the result of locking people up.

Opening the press conference, Grant Patch, a harm reductionist and ACT UP member, declared, "What is happening right now, mere miles away from here near the intersection of Massachusetts and Melnea Cass avenues [Mass & Cass], is nothing less than a human rights violation!"

We demand 'Homes, health care, not jails!'

Bishop Felipe Teixeira, immigration rights activist and abolitionist, opened the rally, stating: "Arresting people doesn't make their lives better. We need real, compassionate solutions that respect people's human rights including homes, health care and specialized treatment, not mass arrests and jails. We say to Mayor Wu: 'Stop the criminalization of Mass Avenue.'"

Leslie Credle, executive director of Justice4Housing, blasted the city's police tactics and described people being kidnapped and disappeared, forced into shelters run like military barracks and dying at the Suffolk County House of Corrections. "We observed the city of Boston take a role as a bully. The Boston Police Department targeted people who were seeking treatment in line at methadone clinics and needle exchange programs. They targeted people who were getting help."

Credle pointed out that the state can always find money for the police and the Department of Corrections, but never for a social response, and stressed that we need long-term solutions where there will be a sustainable impact in our communities. Credle ended by calling for a moment of silence for Ayesha Johnson who died at the Suffolk County jail this past summer, waiting for a bed for alcohol treatment.

ACT UP Boston's statement spotlighted "the same reactionary puritanical and paternalistic thought that stood between our HIV-positive siblings and compassionate care in the '80s and '90s. It is the same thought that keeps our shelters woefully inadequate and restrictive and the same thought that stands between our siblings who use drugs and the services necessary to protect their health."

ACT UP says 'Join the struggle!'

The organization called on "all organizations and individuals to join us in demanding public health solutions and social supports instead of further violence, neglect and criminalization!" (ACT UP Boston Facebook)

Labor leaders like Gerry Scoppettuolo, a founder of Pride at Work Eastern Massachusetts, called out the role of the Newmarket Business Association, which has blocked transitional housing and supervised consumption spaces in the neighborhood, instead planning to hire private security and fund mass surveillance while championing "a clean sweep."

Ed Childs of UNITE HERE Local 26 said, "It's the same fight for the billion-dollar Harvard corporation's dining hall workers, whose contract struggles have centered on skyrocketing costs of housing and health care."

Steve Gillis, an officer of United Steelworkers Local 8751, the Boston School Bus Drivers' union, said, "Our members are on the side of those demanding: 'Housing and health care, not jails!' One hour of Jeff Bezos' profits from his Amazon warehouse at Newmarket could provide housing and medical care for everybody in the neighborhood."

'We will defend our class!'

Brian Shea, a leader of Workers World Party and the Disability Justice and Rights Caucus, extended solidarity to ACT UP, Justice4Housing and all the organizations defending those living at Mass and Cass, who are facing the full weight of state violence. He said: "These attacks are not simply a 'bug in the system,' but a central feature of capitalism that grinds our class down and traumatizes people.

"The profits for the landlords go up, and people can no longer afford their housing and get thrown out. People are living any way they can; they are living on the street and putting up tents in public spaces. Now the state is taking away public space and criminalizing people who are Black and Brown or do not have a house. This system of capitalism is what does that; it's built in.

"Our class creates the wealth that the rich take for their own. Our class creates and builds everything. Every brick in this City Hall Plaza was put in by workers. Every building you see was created by members of our class. We will continue to defend our class living at Mass and Cass. We are organizing — we are acting up and fighting back."

Shea concluded: "We will take back this system that we have created, and we will create a socialist system that organizes for people's needs, where housing and health care are not commodities, where the state apparatus does not chew people up and spit them out. We can do this and we will. We are putting the sheriff, cops, Jeff Bezos and the billionaires on notice that we are coming — because there are more of us than there are them. Act up, fight back!"

'Yes to housing and public health care!'

Rounding out the evening, ACT UP member Sahaira Lopez spoke from her experiences of being houseless: "I have seen how the shelters treat people. . . . We are human beings and deserve to be treated with respect. Me and my husband slept right here at City Hall several times in the winter. Houseless people experience inhumane and disrespectful treatment in the shelters every night."

Lopez stressed: "Today I have housing, and I'm glad. As a person in recovery, I say yes to housing and public health care. I would be dead or overdosed if I did not find housing. I was houseless on the street for almost three years. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share what I have been going through. ACT UP and fight for our rights!"

More on this struggle in Workers World, Oct. 28, "ACT UP Boston demands 'Housing & health care, not jails!' and at ACT UP Boston: Linktr.ee/actupboston.

Struggle from 1970 to now: National Day of Mourning

Continued from page 1

boarded the ship. They climbed the rigging and tore down the flag of Saint George, the patron saint of England. They also tossed a wax statue of the captain of the Mayflower, Christopher Jones, overboard along with the flag of Saint George.

The protesters then made their way to a "re-creation" of the first Thanksgiving dinner, where they flipped over tables saying that they "would not eat the white man's food."

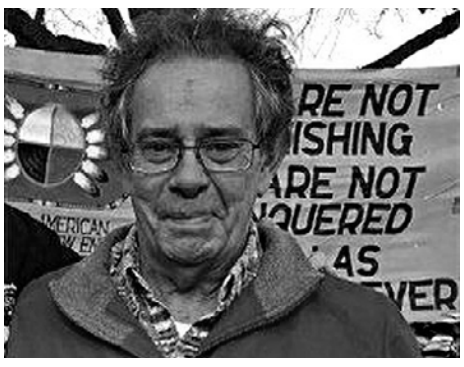
One AIM leader would later say of the first National Day of Mourning that it "is a day American Indians won't forget. We went to Plymouth for a purpose: to mourn since the landing of the Pilgrims the repression of the American Indian; and to indict the hypocrisy of a system which glorifies that repression. We fulfilled that purpose and gained a spirit of unity that spread across the land." ("Russell Means Recounts NDOM, 1971.")

Mourning, indicting and protesting the repression of Native peoples

Every year since the first protest in 1970, protesters have gathered on Cole's Hill to observe a National Day of Mourning. At the 1972 National Day of Mourning, a young woman was attacked by the police for wearing an upside-down American flag draped over her shoulders. At the 1974 National Day of Mourning, Wamsutta and protestors liberated the bones of a 16-year-old Wampanoag girl from the Pilgrim Hall Museum.

In 1997, National Day of Mourning organizers and protesters were attacked and brutalized by the Plymouth police, who arrested 25 protesters. The resulting court case and settlement led to the installation of two plaques, one that marked the origin and purpose of the National Day of Mourning, the other commemorating Metacomet (King Philip), who led resistance against English settlers in 1675.

The settlement also ensured that charges were dropped against all 25 protesters and protected the right to march without a permit each National Day of Mourning.


WW PHOTO: HANNAH KIRSCHBAUM

Moonanum James

Protesters will gather on Cole's Hill on Nov. 25 this year and will continue to do so into the future. As Moonanum James, son of Wamsutta Frank James and the late co-leader of UAINE, said to the crowd at the 2019 National Day of Mourning:

"We will continue to gather on this hill till corporations and the U.S. military stop polluting the Earth. Until we dismantle the brutal apparatus of mass incarceration. We will not stop until the oppression of our Two-Spirit siblings is a thing of the past. When the homeless have homes. When children are no longer taken from their parents and locked in cages. When the Palestinians reclaim the homeland and the autonomy Israel has denied them for the past 70 years. When no person goes hungry or is left to die, because they have little or no access to quality health care. When insulin is free. When union busting is a thing of the past. Until then, the struggle will continue." ❑

Indigenous pride, power and protest

Logistics for National Day of Mourning

The 52nd National Day of Mourning, commemorated by Indigenous peoples and their allies, will be held Thursday, Nov. 25, on the so-called "Thanksgiving" holiday, at Cole's Hill in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Cole's Hill is above the city's historic waterfront district. It will begin at 12 noon sharp.

This year's event will be dedicated to "Moonanum James, Bert Waters and others who have returned to the ancestors," according to the website of the United American Indians of New England. The commemoration will show solidarity with Indigenous struggles around the world and welcomes "all our relations crossed by the U.S. border and Immigration and Customs Enforcement."

There will be a march through the city's historic district. An outdoor speakout will, as always, feature only Native speakers on the program, with messages read from many Indigenous struggles. Organizers ask that participants refrain from eating during the outdoor speakout and march, out of respect for those who are fasting. There will be light box lunches available, but there won't be a full sit-down social due to the COVID pandemic.

Every participant must wear a mask. It should be emphasized that Indigenous communities have been hit hard by this illness, so safety is of utmost concern. Organizers remind those coming to dress warmly.

This year's Day of Mourning will be livestreamed from Plymouth, beginning at noon. View the livestream at tinyurl.com/5yza7vm5.

UAINE is not organizing transportation, but a bus will leave at 6 a.m., Nov. 25, from 206 Parkside Ave. in Brooklyn. For more information, email erityepapadesalin@gmail.com or call 347-730-3620.

For Day of Mourning updates, go to facebook.com/groups/UAINE and uaine.org.

At 'Spirit of Mandela' tribunal

Survivors of mass incarceration speak truth to power

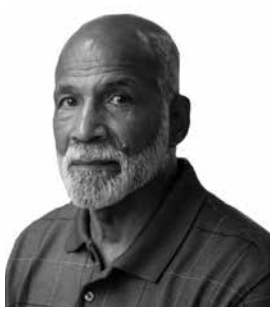
The following are excerpts from testimony given at the Oct. 23-25 "Spirit of Mandela" international tribunal held in New York City. The U.S. was found guilty of six counts of human rights violations, including mass incarceration and in particular, how it treats political prisoners and prisoners of war. These excerpts include opening remarks and answers to questions asked by tribunal examiners.

WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Sharonne Salaam, mother of Yusef Salaam — one of the falsely accused and imprisoned Central Park Five youth — provides testimony Oct. 23 on trauma her son, family suffered.

Jose Saldaña, Director, Release Aging People in Prison; incarcerated for 37 years for conviction of attempted murder of police officer in New York City. Saldaña claimed self-defense.

I actually see the face of mass incarceration, and that face is grandfathers, fathers, sons, brothers. We can also apply it to grandmothers and mothers and daughters, all scattered across the New York State Prison system. Just imagine the devastation that this would do to the family structure and then to the community. So the face of mass incarceration is to eliminate vital parts of families from communities. And this was devastating seeing that this is what was happening and equating it to what happened during the chattel slave history, and then understanding that my children also went through this.



Jose Saldaña

I watched 16-, 17-year-old kids languish in prison for 30, 35 years. We're talking about Brown and Black kids coming in at that age. By the dozens, some dying, never returning back to their families. I saw this as new genocide because if it was happening to white kids at the level that it was happening to Black and Brown kids, there would be a public uproar. To me, this is neo-genocide.

It's not as brutal as the genocide we're accustomed to seeing in history. But this is so subtle that if you're not actually in the face of the storm, you might miss it, and you might not make the connections. It's definitely a new form of genocide, but it's just as devastating and it's just how people are now being targeted. The highest office labeled our children "predators" and then funded the state to kill, to create more prisons for them. That's a conspiracy.

Sharonne Salaam: Justice 4 the Wrongfully Incarcerated; mother of Yusef Salaam of the Central Park Five

Sharonne Salaam: When my son, Yusef Salaam, returned from prison, he had spent just about seven years in prison. He had done three years on parole as a high-risk sexual predator under Megan's Law. He had not been adjudicated at this time or found innocent or declared innocent. He was still a "sexual predator." People were afraid to give him a job. It took 10 years for him to be adjudicated and exonerated of the crime. Sometimes it takes people longer.

The prosecutor and the police said we gotta get somebody. It was an old technique. He said, "Listen, this crime happened. It doesn't matter who committed the crime, but somebody has got to pay." And these kids lived around that park. They were rounded up with many other kids, and they were put in jail for a crime they didn't commit.

Who pays for the damage that's being done to our loved ones? The only reason it's happening is because they feel we are worthless people in this society. We have no power to change it. And for those of us who have a voice, who have some power, who have some strength, we have to move forward and shout from the rooftops about the innocent people in jail — and there are quite a few of them.

Sekou Odinga: member, Black Liberation Army; incarcerated for 33 years

Sekou Odinga

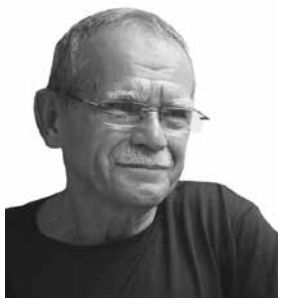
I was a combatant in the Black Liberation Army and captured in 1981 while trying to help transport another soldier of the BLA. He was captured also but murdered in the street while he lay there in submission, trying to give up. They shot him in the back of the head. I consider myself a political prisoner. And based on how I was treated, the state considered me a political prisoner also.

After my capture, I was beaten and tortured for the next six to seven hours. Usually in the U.S. when the police capture somebody or arrest someone, they don't torture them for no six or seven hours. They might smack them upside the head or beat them up for 10-15 minutes. That's par for the course, you know. But for political prisoners, they usually save a particular brutal torture. My head was split open with a handheld walkie talkie that one of the cops, after he cuffed me with my hands behind my back, decided to hit me in the head and knocked me down, almost knocking me out.

At the precinct, they kept me cuffed with my hands behind my back, stood two police on each side of me and started interrogating me. And every time I would answer a question that they didn't like, they would beat me or burn me with a cigar, or they would take my shoes off and grind my toe until the toenail came off. And this went on for about six to seven hours, all the time asking me questions about other comrades that they were looking for, Assata Shakur being one of them. Abdullah Majid being another one.

Oscar López Rivera: member, Armed Forces of Puerto Rican National Liberation; incarcerated 36 years

Solitary confinement is a very detrimental instrument, and it does create a lot of problems for those of us who are the victims. A penitentiary like ADX or Marion is very dehumanizing.



Oscar López Rivera

What the United States government wanted most was to make us pay for a movement that was creating a lot of problems for them. We were condemned to as many years as they could sentence us to. But all of us made a commitment to the independence of Puerto Rico. We were willing to go to prison for Puerto Rico and for the decolonization of Puerto Rico. And for the decolonization of other places, because we never focused only on Puerto Rico.

For us, the injustices that the United States government was doing was painful. When the United States government thought that they really had us, we were strong, and we were able to face the challenges that they imposed on us. Puerto Rico's independence is absolutely necessary.

Colonialism is that tool the United States government has used effectively to take our most fundamental rights as human beings, and that's the right to self-determination. I am profoundly grateful for what Puerto Ricans did for us.

After 36 years of imprisonment, I came home feeling stronger than the day that I entered the first penitentiary, and the time I spent in those penitentiaries was always awful. But little by little, I was able to transcend all the punishments that they threw at me. And I walked out of the United States and into Puerto Rico. And for the independence of Puerto Rico, I have not given up.

Saleem Holbrook: Executive Director, Abolitionist Law Center

It's clear-cut when you have a system that was founded on exploitation, that was founded on genocide, and its legacy continues today, there's no alternative but abolition. We have tried for centuries to reform this system. In 2020, we all witnessed national uprisings against police violence, against police murder, against extrajudicial murder in this country. However, that uprising was nothing new. We saw it in the 1960s. We saw it in 1980 in Liberty City. We saw it in 1992 in Los Angeles. We could go back to the riots of 1919, and we could go back further. This is an epidemic in this country that we have been dealing with for generations.

Saleem Holbrook

It's unfortunate that I still had to experience this when political prisoners and movements 30, 40 and 50 years ago were fighting against this system and the abuses that it brings upon us.

The common failure that I see is that when you look at all of the after-action reports, when you look at all the government reports, all of the city reports, all of them trot out the same tired reforms that were trotted out the last time there was an uprising, the last time there was a riot, the last time we felt the need to have to take to the streets and set something on fire. You have to come to the realization that this tactic has failed. And now we have to push further for abolition, because you can't reform it.

Jalil Muntaqim: member, Black Liberation Army and Black Panther Party; incarcerated for 49 years

COINTELPRO was an operation by the federal government, by the FBI to destroy any progressive, revolutionary or national militant organization during the '50s, '60s and the '70s. COINTELPRO operated to create dissension to infiltrate and to destroy a movement — to use every resource available to them to destroy the Black Panther Party. And by virtue of that, we fought back.

It's very important to understand that our relationship to the state is political. Although they criminalize our politics, they convict us in the court of the criminal courts of law; and therefore, they try to deny the existence of political prisoners. I just want to make this point clear.

Back in 1977, I initiated the first petition to the United Nations to acknowledge the existence of political prisoners, and in the course of that, the condition of the prisons itself. They denied the existence of political prisoners in the United States, the only industrial nation in the world that I'm aware of which denies the existence of political prisoners.

Jalil Muntaqim

Because we are political, the state tries to suppress our capacity to teach. I was sent to solitary confinement for four months for my teaching classes. I was teaching the history of resistance.

One of the things that they did not want us to do is teach prisoners, to raise their consciousness, to remove their relationship with a criminal mentality, to move one towards a revolutionary mentality. And so by virtue of that alone, we political prisoners are targeted inside prisons. We are targeted for segregation. We're targeted to be removed from the populations, we're targeted in every kind of way that we try to evolve ourselves inside prisons. They try to suppress it. ❐

New film on Attica uprising

A fight for human rights

By Monica Moorehead

The Prisoners Solidarity Committee of Workers World Party will be sponsoring a free zoom showing Dec. 10 of the new documentary, "Attica," directed by Stanley Nelson and Traci A. Curry, which premiered on Showtime. One of the surviving participants of the rebellion and a member of the Young Lords, Che Nieves, who was interviewed for the documentary, will be leading a Q&A session.

The discussion will connect the legacy of Attica with the ongoing struggle to free political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, falsely arrested 40 years ago on Dec. 9 in Philadelphia for killing a white police officer.

The zoom showing is scheduled for Dec. 10 because both the Attica rebellion and Mumia's struggle have connections with the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Dec. 10, 1948, which has come to be known as Human Rights Day.

The Declaration proclaims "the inalienable rights which everyone is entitled to as a human being — regardless of race, color, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status." It has been translated into 500 languages, more than any other document worldwide. (tinyurl.com/3fz2yp5y)

Every year, the U.N. projects a theme for HRD. The theme for 2021 will be "Equality" as it relates to Article 1 of the Declaration, which states, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

Even the U.N. acknowledges that what was declared almost 73 years ago is far from meeting today's goal. In fact, the majority of the world will not be born free as long as poverty, inequality, racism, misogyny, gender oppression, militarism and other class divisions exist due to an economic system that prioritizes profits, not human needs — capitalism.

Back in 1951, a prominent group of mainly Black activists presented a petition to the U.N. entitled "We Charge Genocide: The Crime of Government Against the Negro People" to bring international attention to lynchings, Jim Crow and other forms of racist discrimination suffered by people of African descent.

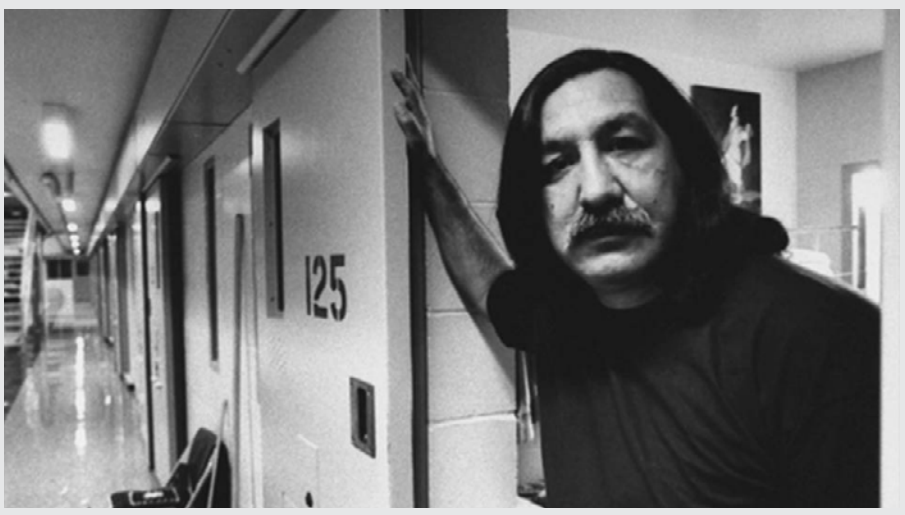
This group presented facts using articles from the UDHR and other U.N. declarations. And just this past October, a panel of international jurists found the U.S. guilty of six major counts of human rights violations against Black, Latinx and Indigenous peoples during a "Spirit of [Nelson] Mandela" tribunal, with the rallying cry of "We still charge genocide." (Read at *workers.org/2021/11/59858/*)

'Attica means fight back'

This past Sept. 9-13 was the 50th anniversary of the largest prison rebellion in U.S. history, the Attica uprising in upstate New York. To repress this rebellion, Governor Nelson Rockefeller's state troopers and local police slaughtered more than 30 unarmed prisoners and 10 prison employees, with hundreds more prisoners tortured.

These incarcerated human beings — Black, Latinx and white — were demanding their rights as stated under the UDHR. The legacy of Attica remains 50 years later as a powerful reminder of the universal struggle to break once and for all the chains of all forms of capitalist exploitation by all workers united by any means necessary.

Che Nieves told WW, "We made a commitment on September 9, 1971, and said that Attica means 'Fight Back.' And we fought back for human decency and human rights. That fight is still going on. We want all prisoners to be free and all prisons destroyed." ❐



Free Leonard Peltier!

Revolutionaries and people of conscience support the movement to free Leonard Peltier, a member of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa also of Lakota and Dakota heritage, who has been incarcerated by the U.S. since 1975. During the Wounded Knee occupation of 1973, Peltier, an American Indian Movement leader, was asked by traditional people at Pine Ridge, South Dakota, to support and protect the traditional people being targeted there by violence at the instigation of the FBI. After FBI agents died, Peltier was tried, sentenced to life imprisonment, and denied a new trial, despite new evidence and biased legal proceedings. Peltier is one of the most well-known Native political prisoners from the period of militant struggle in the 1970s. Free Leonard Peltier! ❐

Seven years later

Still fighting for 'Justice for Tamir'

By Martha Grevatt
Cleveland

Nov. 22 will mark the seventh anniversary of 12-year-old Tamir Rice's murder by Cleveland police. Tamir's Campaign for Justice held a "Long March for Justice for Our Beloved Tamir Rice" Nov. 9 and rallied to demand both Cuyahoga County and the U.S. Department of Justice reopen the case, which the DOJ secretly closed while President Donald Trump was still in office.

Tamir's mother Samaria Rice, along with other family members and supporters, demonstrated in Washington, D.C., Oct. 26 and met with DOJ officials about restarting its investigation but have not received a decision. Tamir's Campaign held a Libation Ceremony in Tamir's honor Nov. 5.

Neither of the two cops involved in the shooting have been charged with a crime. The killer, Timothy Loehmann, was only fired years later for an unrelated offense. Loehmann's partner, Frank Garmback, remains on the force.

Speakers blasted Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael O'Malley, who campaigned on a pledge to bring justice for Tamir but has done absolutely nothing since winning the election in 2017.

The demonstration occurred one week after Cleveland voters passed Issue 24, a measure to hold police accountable for brutality and misconduct. ❐

'Long Walk for Justice for Our Beloved Tamir Rice,' Nov. 8, Cleveland. WW PHOTO: SUSAN SCHNUR

Huntington, W.Va. Hospital workers hit the picket line

By Otis Grotewohl
Huntington, W.Va.

After three months of contentious contract negotiations, close to 1,000 members of SEIU District 1199 WV/KY/OH Service Unit initiated a 10-day strike by walking off their jobs at Cabell-Huntington Hospital at noon November 3. CHH is in Huntington, West Virginia's largest city.

Striking members of the unit include maintenance employees, service workers, X-ray and lab technicians, custodians, cleaning staff and licensed practical nurses. Registered Nurses are also represented by SEIU District 1199, but they have a separate contract.

The contract for the Service Unit members expired Nov. 2 and the main disagreement has been over health care benefits.

WW PHOTO

Striking hospital workers walk the picket line at Cabell-Huntington Hospital, Huntington, W.Va., Nov. 7.

Joyce Gibson, secretary-treasurer of SEIU District 1199 WV/KY/OH, publicly stated, "[The hospital] has committed multiple unfair labor practice charges and continues to harass and threaten union members….This comes after months of negotiations with the executives at CHH, who have repeatedly made it clear that they value profits over workers and patients. This conflict comes after decades of successful contract negotiations with previous hospital administrations, but clearly these executives have decided that they will be prioritizing profits over care, staffing, retention, and dignity." (WSAZ, 11/3/21).

Workers World visited the picket line and spoke with Cole Wojdacz, the union's communications liaison. Wojdacz informed WW: "This is the first strike of Service Unit members in 23 years. Things were calm until the 2018 merger with St. Mary's Hospital. Workers are now at risk of losing all of the benefits they worked for and were once promised."

Cabell-Huntington Hospital support and service workers have had a steady contract and have been represented by SEIU for over 40 years. Conditions changed in 2018 when the hospital was one of many health care facilities in the area to be taken over by the for-profit corporation Mountain Health Network.

Although the corporation is not willing to negotiate a fair contract, they are rumored to be paying line-crossers much more than what they are willing to offer their own employees. Wojdacz added, "The scabs do not know what they are doing and patients are not receiving the care they need. Trash is piling up and the rooms are not being cleaned. To make matters worse, A1 security guards have verbally assaulted picketers and management is threatening to discipline our members inside who speak with any of the strikers."

Nurses are not on strike but they have expressed solidarity — despite risks of retaliation from management. Some workers on the inside have anonymously posted images on social media of overflowing garbage and unfilled toilet paper and paper-towel dispensers.

Continuation of Striketober!

SEIU 1199 District WV/KY/OH is the third union to go on strike in the Huntington area since October. Workers at Special Metals in Huntington, represented by the United Steelworkers Local 40, and members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Local 598 in neighboring Barboursville both went on strike Oct. 1. IAMAW members at Sulzer settled, while close to 450 USW members at Special Metals are still out and strong. In all three instances, the bosses operated in bad faith by arbitrarily trying to make health care costs unaffordable for many employees.

Workers are rising up in the region. United Food and Commercial Workers Local 23D at Heaven Hill Distillery, a Kentucky bourbon company located two and a half hours west of Huntington, won a fair contract in late October, following a militant six-week strike.

All over the world workers are watching what is happening with John Deere workers who have defiantly rejected concessions in their bitter fight. The ongoing labor battles are especially important in light of the increasing rise of the far right — recently emboldened by the Virginia election results — and their racist attacks on public education and teachers unions.

These struggles are connected. One of the biggest union-busting outfits in the U.S, the American Legislative Exchange Council, is also a hefty donor behind the reactionary movement fueling the attack on "Critical Race Theory," i.e., teaching the truth about racism and national oppression in the U.S. (Triple Pundit, July 21).

ALEC operates as a lobbyist group that promotes anti-union legislation such as "right-to-work" (for-less) laws.

The working class is starting to realize it has strength in numbers and what workers can accomplish when they take collective action. The next step is organizing workers to understand how their struggle is tied to the larger fight against the profit-driven system and its reactionary enforcers — the very system which pushed them to the picket line.

More at SEIU District 1199 on Facebook @ seiu1199wvkyoh.

Texas Exxon locks out Steelworkers at refinery

By Gloria Rubac
Beaumont, Texas

Nov. 13 — On May Day this year about 650 union workers, members of United Steelworkers Local 13-243, showed up at the Exxon refinery here only to discover that this billion-dollar company had locked them out.

WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

Contract bargaining had come to a standoff, with Exxon demanding concessions that would undermine safety and job security, as well as putting the community at risk.

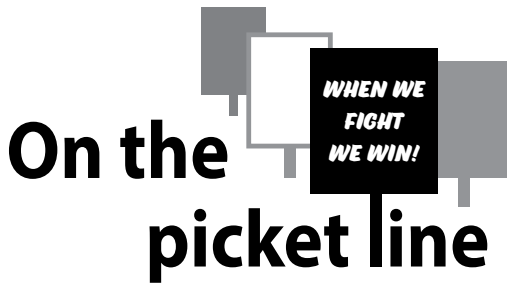
USW Local 13-243 oil workers are fighting one of the largest and most powerful corporations in the world. In the first quarter of 2021 alone, the company recorded $2.7 billion in revenue. Exxon's latest attempt to break the union is by demanding that the NLRB hold a decertification vote, with ballots mailed to all union workers a few weeks before Christmas.

On Nov. 13, activists from Houston were organized by the DSA chapter, and a carpool from Houston went to walk the picket lines. Steelworker Richard Lanndry explained to the Houston activists that the union wasn't even asking for a raise but had refused to make concessions on safety issues and job security.

"Right now the bosses and a few others are working at the refinery, but the production is way, way down," Landry said. "They are going to lose this decertification vote. We know that for sure."

Other trips from Houston are being organized to stand in solidarity with the workers challenging Exxon-Mobil. It may look like David fighting Goliath, but as the workers' song says, "The union makes us strong." ☐

On the picket line



By Marie Kelly

Wheels on the bus go round and round

Reno, Nevada, bus drivers have voted down the most recent contract offer and went back on strike Nov. 9. City bus service is contracted out to the privately owned Keolis bus company. The Teamsters Local 533 members voted 90% "no," with only six drivers voting to return to work. Wages are still the issue. Salary concessions by Keolis would have kept up with the rate of inflation. This is the drivers' third strike in four months.

In **Howard County, Maryland**, school bus drivers won a $5,000 bonus after 80 AFSCME union drivers called out sick for one morning shift and demanded wage and benefit increases. Drivers had no pay increase since 2009. The Board of Education agreed to negotiate with drivers about benefits before the end of 2021. The community supports the drivers. One parent, who drove her child to school on the day of the strike, stated she was all for the drivers getting higher pay: "We love our bus drivers." (tinyurl.com/4skyccnk)

Nurses know safe staffing saves lives

St. Vincent Hospital nurses in **Worcester, Massachusetts**, continue their heroic battle against employer Tenet, a for-profit hospital conglomerate. The nurses have been on strike for eight months. Tenet seems unfazed by repeated appeals by state legislators and the city's mayor that it meet the nurses' demand for their reinstatement to bedside positions, which some have held for as long as 35 years.

Nurses at Mercy Hospital in **Buffalo, New York**, represented by Communications Workers Local 1133, ratified a four-year contract Nov. 9. The 2,000 health care workers then ended a strike which had begun in early October. The new contract provides clear requirements for safe staffing on critical care and medical-surgical units.

PHOTO: NEW YORK FOCUS

Striking nurses picketed Mercy Hospital in Buffalo, N.Y., during their month-long October strike

New York State will implement a safe-staffing law in January; however, the nurse-patient ratios are not specifically mandated as they were in California's progressive law. The New York law only requires hospitals to negotiate staffing levels yearly. Nurses at the Buffalo hospital wanted their contract to have hard-and-fast nurse-patient ratios, and that's what they won.

Health care workers at three privately owned nursing homes in **St. Louis, Missouri**, are on strike over poor staffing conditions and safety of workers. The workers at the Blue Circle Rehab and Nursing facility have yet to finalize a contract, with management stalling for over a year. Their union, SEIU Healthcare Missouri/Kansas, has filed a NLRB Unfair Labor Practice complaint charging that the facility's owner, Blue Circle Holding, is not bargaining in good faith.

Lemar Young, who has worked at the nursing home for 20 years, says he knows it would be easier to quit, but he is striking to improve conditions for all workers at the facility. "It's not the pay," Young said. "It's really trying to get a change in there." (tinyurl.com/3hzbffm7) ☐

Boston bus drivers take contract struggle to the street

By Steve Gillis,
Executive Board, USW Local 8751

Local 8751 drivers and supporters blockading the entrance to Transdev HQ Nov. 9. WW PHOTOS: STEVE KIRSCHBAUM

Boston, Nov. 14 — Banging drums and chanting "No contract, no work," hundreds of Boston school bus drivers from far-flung yards converged on their employer Transdev's office during their Nov. 9 morning break. With a week to go until their contract expires, Boston School Bus Drivers, Steelworkers Local 8751 drivers and their supporters blockaded the street and entrance to the billion-dollar, transnational corporation's headquarters for two hours in a dress rehearsal showing their intention to strike.

Darlene Lombos, secretary treasurer of the Greater Boston Labor Council, opened the "Contract Justice Now!" rally championing "the dangerous work of you essential, frontline workers during the pandemic. You have a right to better wages, benefits, retirement and respect for your service to the children of Boston."

Lombos referenced the five deaths, including four Local 8751 members, and many COVID-19 illnesses in the school bus operation since the March 2020 lockdown. At that time union drivers organized delivery of tens of thousands of meals to Boston children and their families.

This week a spike of delta COVID-19 has begun to close schools in the district again, with rapid spread to the bus yards where a surge of breakthrough cases, sickness and quarantines has hit drivers, monitors and dispatchers.

John Buonopane, Steelworkers' staff representative, brought leaders of USW locals who were recently victorious after being locked out by National Grid Energy Corporation to the rally. He said, "We demand extended COVID-19 full pay and benefits for our hardworking members who have sacrificed so much. Our physical and financial health and safety is the only thing that can keep this school system running. Without it, the system will completely shut down."

Local 8751's spiritual advisors Bishop Felipe Teixeira and Imam Abdullah Faaruuq inspired the crowd, recounting many instances of Local 8751's solidarity with struggles in their communities. Imam Faaruuq led the crowd from atop the Dorchester Art Project's truck singing The O'Jays' legendary "Got to Give the People What They Want!"

With Boukman Eksperyans, Street Dogs and Bob Marley's songs of struggle blaring from DAP's truck, workers danced around the picket line in a militant, festival-like display that bosses peeking out their windows could see. Workers World Party's young activist singer Kristen Turgeon fired up the rally belting out the coal miners' anthem, "Which Side Are You On?"

André François, Local 8751's three-term elected President, spoke to the members' seething anger at Transdev's weekly pay shortages, constant discipline harassment, refusal to negotiate and brutal pandemic working conditions. François condemned "Transdev bosses who continue to sit in their cozy offices counting their big paychecks, while drivers and monitors are forced to burn our own gas to survive all day outside in Boston's freezing and rainy weather."

The union's near 1,000-strong workforce are predominantly immigrants from Haiti and Cape Verde. They took up President François' call with repeated chants of "Transdev, you will know! Union busting's got to go!"

François congratulated mayor-elect Michelle Wu, saying, "We are optimistic that when Mayor Wu takes office next week, her campaign promise to be the workers' rights mayor for all can force Transdev to do the right thing and avert another school bus drivers' strike."

It's a shortage of wages, benefits, respect

Ten-year veteran driver Dulande Florestal told Workers World: "We are suffering. We can't afford to pay rent, buy food for our families and commute to work with prices going so high. They say there's a shortage of school bus drivers. Look at Brockton and all the other districts raising wages to $30 and more. If Transdev wants to keep us driving, they have to pay for it."

In the greater Boston region, Governor Charlie Baker has called in the National Guard to drive school children in cities and towns whose drivers earn significantly less than those in Boston. Boston officials rejected such a military solution, because Local 8751's contract agreements would allow the union to fight non-union replacements. (Boston Herald, Oct. 7)

Felipe Martinez, an Uber/Lyft driver organizing in Boston as the Boston Independent Drivers Guild, pledged his budding union's solidarity. Martinez condemned "Uber's campaign to turn all professional drivers into contractors without worker rights. We won't cross the lines!"

Myles Calvey, Business Manager of the fighting Verizon Workers International Electrical Workers (IBEW) 2222, recalled decades of strike solidarity with Local 8751. Calvey pledged, "Whatever backup your great local needs, IBEW 2222 will be there!"

Union veep blasts city's disrespect

Steve Kirschbaum, Local 8751 vice president, helped found the union during 1970s street battles against racist, paramilitary forces, who violently attacked buses carrying Black and Brown children to segregated white neighborhoods.

Kirschbaum blasted the city government for its disrespect and negligence in siding with Transdev. "When Transdev, then called Veolia, first came to town in 2013, their first act was to fire the union's leadership and frame us up in court with charges that could lead to 30 years in prison. We beat them back then with our solidarity and determination to shut them down.

"The city of Boston continues to give Transdev a sweetheart deal of total cost pass-through. The city has a very short time to intervene to avoid catastrophe."

On Nov. 2, in a landslide against an opponent whose racist program included more cops and attacks on students' right to transportation, Wu became the first woman and person of color ever popularly elected to mayor in the 400-year history of this hometown of U.S. settler colonialism.

Wu's campaign included the program of housing and health care, not jails, for houseless people who use drugs. It also supported the Black Lives Matter movement's demand to fund social services with money from bloated police budgets. Wu reflected the progressive mood of Boston's now majority communities of color.

The Steelworkers' contract expires, coincidentally, one day before Mayor Wu takes office. The usual January swearing in was unexpectedly pushed forward to Nov. 16.

As strike signs are being printed, Local 8751 has found itself in round-the-clock negotiations with various sectors of Boston's ruling class based on Local 8751's strike preparations, which have received front-page coverage. Whatever developments the next days' struggles bring, this union's ranks proved in their first test of strength that the only road to survival and a better world is to join the national wave of strikes, job actions and resistance organizing against big capital. ☐

Lessons of the Buffalo, N.Y., mayoral election

By Ryan Lockwood
Buffalo, N.Y.

Nov. 14 — Under normal circumstances, Buffalo's mayoral election would have been little more than the 16-year incumbent Democrat Byron Brown's coronation ceremony. But India Walton, who declared herself a socialist, interrupted the well-rehearsed proceedings with a stunning June primary upset against Brown. Both candidates are African American.

Walton ran on a platform of police reform and tenants' rights. She had become a familiar face in activist circles during the George Floyd uprisings in 2020.

Instead of conceding after the primary, Brown launched a write-in campaign for the November ballot. All the conservative, pro-capitalist forces in Buffalo immediately coalesced behind Brown. The local news stations were happy to run Brown's slanderous attack ads.

Carl Paladino, the arch-reactionary Buffalo real estate developer and early supporter of Donald Trump, announced his endorsement of Brown's write-in campaign. The Republican Party of New York State crossed party lines to distribute thousands of mailers to voters urging them to "write down Brown."

After three months of lies, treachery and red-baiting, Brown pulled out an 18-point victory over Walton in the general election.

Limitations of electoral politics

Revolutionary Marxists can at no point expect an electoral victory to establish socialism. The U.S. electoral system was designed by and for the capitalist class as an instrument of class repression. In the early days of the United States, the vote was reserved for white men with property.

Subsequent progressive movements have opened up the right to vote to others (rampant and racist voter suppression notwithstanding), but they have been unable to change the fundamental class character of the ballot box. White men with property remain its prime beneficiaries.

Real socialism requires a fundamental break with the current social order; the workers must control the means of production and receive the benefits of their labor. The parasitic class of bosses, bankers and landlords is obsolete and can be tossed aside.

Most importantly socialism requires the organized working class to destroy the existing state apparatus and substitute its own. Walton's campaign was certainly progressive and represented a clear break with the anti-worker, neoliberal political order, but it never left the realm of social reform.

Nevertheless, revolutionary Marxists can critically support a progressive but non-Marxist, working-class movement. Walton's campaign reflected a great crying out from the most oppressed layers of the working class, represented both in Walton herself and in her base of support.

In the Nov. 7 Guardian, Walton clarified how she got where she is today: "The struggle. The struggle of being a Black woman, of being a teenage mother, of growing up poor and really experiencing so many tragedies and traumas."

Most support among workers

With official results still pending, the data available suggests that Walton performed strongest in the working-class, non-white neighborhoods in the East and West Sides and weakest in affluent white neighborhoods in the North. To disregard these voices would be an error for a revolutionary organization.

Walton's campaign was most successful in providing a barometer of public opinion and in building a highly visible platform. Some 41% of Buffalo's voters embraced an explicitly pro-worker platform. This gives a reason for optimism.

Of course, Walton was not merely running a campaign to make a point. She was in it to win. Buffalo's political establishment used every effort to prevent her victory.

Even if Walton had won the election, we could anticipate that powerful capitalist lobbies and a resentful, uncooperative police force would sabotage any efforts to introduce her progressive agenda in Buffalo. The U.S. government, at every level, is an apparatus of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. A mass struggle would be needed to win every point in her platform.

Revolutionaries view campaigns such as Walton's as a means of encouraging more formidable organization and class consciousness among the workers. To that end, the campaign has already contributed something of great value to the movement. Byron Brown and his cronies would be unwise to gloat too loudly. Despite the electoral setback, it can provide a stepping stone towards ultimate victory. ☐

North Americans debunk accusations of Nicaragua election fraud

The following are excerpts from a Nov. 9 press release from kawsachunnews.com.

Nov. 9 press conference, Managua, Nicaragua. PHOTO: FRIENDS OF THE ATC

On Nov. 9, Canadian and U.S. representatives held a press conference in Managua, Nicaragua, on what they saw on election day, Nov. 7. Over 165 international representatives and 67 journalists from 27 countries visited over 100 election centers throughout the country.

The speakers/observers represented Alliance for Global Justice, Black Lives Matter, Black Alliance for Peace, Casa Baltimore/Limay, Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice, Friends of Latin America, Friendship Office of the Americas, Sanctions Kill, Green Party, Task Force on the Americas, Jubilee House Community, Veterans for Peace and U.S. Peace Council.

They reported that the election was free and fair and clearly represented the desires of the Nicaraguan people. They addressed several aspects of the democratic process including the process to form political parties, free speech and how the ballots and votes were secured.

While the Biden administration has labeled the election a "sham," the delegates' observations contradict these accusations. They observed an election that was efficient, transparent, with widespread turnout and participation of six opposition parties, including two that last headed the government.

They traveled to five departments and two autonomous regions: Bilwi, Bluefields, Chinandega, Chontales, Granada, Leon, Pearl Lagoon and Managua. They visited over 30 different voting centers and interviewed voters and poll watchers representing different political parties.

The turnout was high in all areas, especially in the morning, and yet the lines moved very quickly. In one of the busier times and places, it took about eight minutes from arrival through electronic check-in and checking of picture ID, to a second check of ID at the designated polling place, sign-in on paper, voting by secret ballot and finally having their thumb inked. Nicaragua inks each voter's thumb, among many other checks to prevent duplicate voting.

Voters praise Sandinista government

A group of 11 people visited Bilwi on the Caribbean coast. Voters told them of the way the government saved lives during the two category 4 and 5 hurricanes last year. The government quickly restored power, helped restore and rebuild homes. The schools where the voting took place were in good condition, some buildings newly rebuilt.

Before the FSLN government they had one kilometer [0.62 miles] of paved road. Now they have 500 kilometers of paved road; and when another 70 kilometers are completed, it will be possible to drive all the way to Managua. The incumbent FSLN party received its highest percentage vote in this region, an amazing 86.7%.

Josh Higginbotham from Oklahoma spoke about the profound contrast between the status of sovereign Indigenous peoples in his home state and those in Nicaragua's autonomous regions, where over 30% of the landmass once held by Nicaragua has been ceded back to the Afrodescendientes [Afro-descendant] and other Indigenous communities, and their autonomy is respected.

The results of the election reflect the intentions of the Nicaraguan people, the international witnesses reported. The process was extremely secure, much more secure than in the U.S. There is absolutely no way anyone could alter ballots or miscount them, because every ballot box is secured at all times under the watch of several people from different political parties.

The results reported by the government are highly verifiable, as votes on paper ballots in every voting center can be followed through the counting and tabulation with a secure chain of custody through each level of government—voting center, municipality, region and nation.

The group demanded that the U.S. and Canadian governments recognize the results of the democratic elections in Nicaragua and end economic sanctions. ❐

A Sandinista's view on autonomy

'We became visible'

By Johnny Hodgson

Voters on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, Nov. 7. PHOTO: NEFTA FREEMAN

The following is part two of a presentation given by Johnny Hodgson, Sandinista National Liberation Front's Political Secretary for the Autonomous Region of the South Caribbean (RACCS), on Oct. 6 in Managua, Nicaragua, to a U.S. delegation comprised of Coleen Littlejohn, Sara Flounders, Monica Moorehead, Joav Elinevsky and Stan Smith. The transcript is lightly edited. Read part one at workers.org/2021/11/60020/

The Sandinista revolution established the mission to create a new nation, a new Nicaraguan nationality, a multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual country, where the Indigenous and Afro-descendant would have the possibility of participating on an equal basis in the construction of this new Nicaraguan nation.

We reached the conclusion that for the well-being of the Caribbean coast people, what we call the buen vivir in Spanish or good living, we needed autonomy. The people from the Caribbean coast needed to have an autonomous status. And we began to figure out how we are going to build this autonomy.

Three is a triangle; three bases, three posts, we have to set up one. One will be national unity. One will be the recognition of the historical rights of the people. And one will be the constitutional principle. Those were the three bases to build this autonomy on. And so once we had that clear, we were able to begin to work on the constitutional principles. We have to make sure that those principles are clear.

One of the principles in the Constitution established in Nicaragua is a multiethnic country. In Nicaragua, you have Indigenous and Afro-descendant people, and these Indigenous and Afro-descendent people have rights. They have their own languages. They have their own culture. They have a right to own property, et cetera. So we began to be visible. Indigenous and Afro-descendant people came into the Constitution, and we began to discuss the topic of national unity.

Everybody said national unity is important. But when we began to talk about national unity, some people were saying yes, but if we are to build national unity, why is it that you all in the Caribbean coast want to speak your own language? Why do you want to have your own team, you know? And so we reached the understanding to build national unity based on the recognition of diversity.

Unity in diversity means that I as a Black man can participate on an equal basis with the Mestizo man or the Miskitu man or woman, but that I don't have to stop being who I am to be able to participate on an equal basis — that I could participate and preserve my identity and not only preserve my identity, but create the condition where I could become proud, to become proud of being a Creole, of being proud of being a Mestizo. So those are the things that we were defining.

Then we could define our autonomy as the recognition and effective exercise of the historical rights of the Indigenous and the Afro-descendant people in the context of national unity and the constitutional principles. The recognition — but not only recognition. The recognition and effective exercise of the historical rights of the Indigenous people and ethnic communities of the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua in the context of national unity and constitutional principles.

We got our autonomy law approved in 1987 to make the changes. Autonomy is the revolution on the Caribbean coast, that is the instrument to make the revolution, to do all the changes that we need to make on the Caribbean coast for the people to have that well-being. So we had our autonomy law approved 34 years ago. The idea was to start to implement that autonomy law in 1990 that recognized all our rights.

But in 1990 when we tried to implement the autonomy law, that's when we began to face reality. We elected our own government, but the national government did not agree with the autonomy law.

Something that hurt me so much was to hear people from the government saying, 'It is a mistake to put practically 50% of the national territory in the hands of Black and Indian uncivilized people.' That's the way they referred to us. So we knew that there wasn't going to be a way to make much headway in the implementation of those rights that were recognized for us. We couldn't even get what we call a regulation of the law. So we had autonomy, but autonomy was in the air. We couldn't implement it.

Sandinistas regained power

In 2007, Sandinistas came back to government, and that's when we were able to sit on the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua with the national government and agree upon how we're going to implement this autonomy. So we were able to approve what we call a "human development strategy" for the well-being of the coastal people and the implementation of autonomy. In 2007 when we came up with that strategy, which all of us here were working on, what we did was establish indicators of where we were in 2007. So I will just mention some of these statistics.

In 2007 in education, the entire country had 30% illiteracy. But on the Caribbean coast, we had 58%, twice the amount of illiterate people. In maternal mortality, 86 of each 100,000 women die during childbirth, but on the Caribbean coast, 243 of each 100,000 women die, three times more maternal mortality. In infant mortality in the country, 35 in 1,000 children died at birth in the whole country; and in the Caribbean coast, 49 of each 1,000 children died.

Seventy-three percent of the people had access to water, where they can turn on the tap and water will come out, even if it's not 24 hours a day and even if it's not high-quality water. On the Caribbean coast only 4% had access to water. And that access was like one hour or two hours

Continued on page 9

Marxist-Leninist revolutionary

Thomas Sankara – unconquered

Part 1

By Devin Cole

First part of the author's appreciation of the role of assassinated African political leader Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso.

In April 2021 a military court in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, finally indicted Blaise Compaore in the murder of revolutionary Marxist-Leninist and former Burkinabe president Thomas Sankara. Sankara established a revolutionary government in Burkina Faso in August 1983.

In October 1987 Compaore oversaw a coup d'etat that resulted in the assassination of Sankara and 12 other Burkinabe officials. He proceeded to reverse Sankara's policies and force Burkina Faso back to reliance on capitalist, colonialist entities, such as its colonizer France and the International Monetary Fund.

Compaore is now one of 14 people being tried on a variety of charges ranging from assassination to concealment of a corpse. Compaore has lived in the Ivory Coast since 2014, after he fled Burkina Faso when a popular uprising forced his resignation after a 27-year rule marked by unfair, rigged elections.

Thomas Sankara

Reclaiming the revolutionary work of Sankara

The steps Compaore took to "rectify" Burkina Faso after Sankara's assassination were supposedly done to "restore the shattered Burkinabe economy."

When communist leaders die or are assassinated, a fierce propaganda campaign is undertaken immediately by imperialist powers, neocolonialist coup leaders and others to tarnish the reputation of the ousted leader, to delegitimize their work, to topple the revolutionary foundation on which they built and to send the masses back into the clutches of capitalism-imperialism. Such was the case of Blaise Compaore and his long attack on Thomas Sankara.

So what were the "disastrous" policies of Thomas Sankara? Did progress or reaction triumph with his ousting and assassination?

'A new society'

In August 1983, Thomas Sankara and members of a left-wing armed forces faction, including Blaise Compaore, seized power from Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo, president of what was then known as Upper Volta. This came one year after Ouédraogo himself had seized power from Saye Zerbo and installed a right-wing government, which put Sankara into house arrest.

Immediately upon taking power, Sankara sought to bring about ecological, economic and social changes to the country of Upper Volta, which was quickly renamed Burkina Faso, or 'Land of Incorruptible People.'

Sankara borrowed principles and structural ideas from socialist Cuba, such as the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. In Burkina Faso, these were revolutionary cells in every workplace, village and urban neighborhood to "organize the Voltaic [later Burkinabe] people as a whole and involve them in the revolutionary struggle." ("Thomas Sankara Speaks: The Burkina Faso Revolution," pp. 94-95)

Responsibilities for these groups consisted of political education of the Burkinabe masses, information against backward ideas and slanderous lies, organizing plans of action to support the revolution, upholding the line of the National Council for the Revolution (CNR) and practicing democratic centralism. This type of governing was a dramatic change from the previous feudal government of Upper Volta and ushered in what Sankara deemed "a new society."

Women's Liberation

An early major change undertaken by Sankara related to the role of women in Burkina Faso's government and the revolution overall. He emphasized: "The weight of age-old traditions in our society has relegated women to the rank of beasts of burden. Women suffer doubly from the scourges of neocolonial society. First, they experience the same suffering as men. Second, they are subjected to additional suffering by men." ("Thomas Sankara Speaks," pp. 102)

Sankara spoke of his own outdated views on the role of women, vowing to both change himself and plant a seed of change in every man in Burkina Faso, so that a woman would no longer be seen as biologically inferior or merely a sexual being, wife, mother or sister, but as a freedom fighter, a disciplined revolutionary and dedicated cadre.

Sankara showed that, using dialectical materialist thinking, the oppression of women is based in economic and social conditions of capitalism-imperialism, through the historical transition of different forms of society that gradually emphasized and normalized the oppression of women. "Women's oppression," Sankara said, "was a direct reflection of her economic oppression." He emphasized that this truth can only be brought to consciousness through a dialectical process of understanding women's place as an active social force in the revolution. ["Thomas Sankara Speaks," pp. 341]

Under Sankara's government, forced marriages and polygamy were outlawed, as was genital surgery on girls. The Women's Union of Burkina was founded and ensured a swift and democratic mobilization of women cadres for liberation and defense of the revolution. Women were guaranteed positions in the CNR and were encouraged to work outside the home, helping to build the Burkina Faso revolution. This move was unprecedented for its time and cemented Sankara's place as a fighter for women's liberation that still persists today.

10 million trees

By the 1983 revolution, Burkina Faso had been in a period of drought for over 30 years. The country is part of the southern range of the Sahel, an ecotone south of the Sahara. By 1986, the desertification of the Sahel was advancing at 7 kilometers (4.3 miles) a year.

In Burkina Faso, the Burkinabe people combated this desertification with the 1983 rollout of the People's Development Program. Under an initiative of Sankara and the CNR, people planted 10 million trees. A requirement of every family in the villages was that they must plant 100 trees per year, and 7,000 plant nurseries were created for widespread seed-planting.

When new housing and community spaces were built, these could be rented not for a price but for a promise the renter would plant the minimum number of trees in that location and tend to them as they grew. In instances of conviction for arson, one punishment was planting a certain number of trees.

Between 1984 and 1986, to reduce consumption of firewood from trees, 83,500 cookstoves were built by schoolchildren as school projects and by women in initiatives to support the revolution.

Vaccinations, water and the lives of children

Prior to the revolution, the Burkina Faso literacy rate was 12%, and school attendance of children was 6%. In two years under Sankara's government, school attendance and the literacy rate both jumped to 22%.

Prerevolution, upwards of 50,000 children died annually from meningitis or measles. Sankara began a massive vaccination campaign that saw 2.5 million children between nine months and 14 years old vaccinated against measles, which can cause meningitis. The lives of tens of thousands of children were saved.

With the revolution, 5,000 pharmacies were built in more than 70% of the villages. Wells were drilled, ensuring clean drinking water to every district, including 20 that had not had any clean drinking water.

By 1984, one year after the revolution, infant mortality had dropped from 208 per 1,000 to 145. ☐

A Sandinista's view on autonomy

'We became visible'

Continued from page 8

a day, and the water was saltwater. In the sewage system in the country, 31% of the people had access to sewage, and in the Caribbean coast, zero.

In paved roads, Nicaragua had 2,000 kilometers [1,240 miles] of paved roads. Some of the roads were good and weren't in optimum condition, but they were paved. And on the Caribbean coast, that is the other half of the country, we had 140 kilometers of paved roads. Fifty-four percent of the people were connected to some electrical energy service, even if it's just a few hours during the day, but they had that connection to something. On the Caribbean coast, only 25% of the people were connected to maybe a generator that worked from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the community.

I share these numbers, because 2007 is when we got the possibility of implementing autonomy and having a strategy for the human development of the Caribbean coast.

I'm proud of Nicaragua, that is the whole idea of autonomy. It's not to divide the country; it's not to separate from the rest of the country; it is to build unity, genuine unity. Unity, peace and the recognition of diversity, that is our dream. That is our plan. That is what we're trying to do on the Caribbean coast. And we are, with difficulty, making some good headway. We are seeing things on the Caribbean coast that we used to only dream of today, the things that my parents and grandparents were fighting for. ☐

Palestine's flag waves in Jersey City

On Nov. 15, the flag of Palestine waved in front of Jersey City's City Hall, an important first step to the recognition of the Palestinian people, said Ward D Councilperson Yousef Saleh. Saleh had suggested the flag raising to the Jersey City Cultural Affairs Department — saying it was important to recognize the Palestinian people both in Jersey City and abroad, as many are traumatized by the increased violence.

— Report and photo by Sara Flounders

WORKERS WORLD
editorial

Long live the Cuban Revolution!

When on Jan. 8, 1959, a triumphant Fidel Castro entered Havana, he called on Cuban revolutionaries to "settle down to the peaceful aims of the Revolution." He spoke with a white dove on his shoulder, a symbol associated with Fidel throughout his long life.

But the U.S. empire, with its southernmost point a mere 90 miles from the socialist island nation, has never allowed Cuba to know peace. The U.S.-sponsored invasion of Cuba in 1961 at Playa Girón (the Bay of Pigs) suffered a resounding defeat, but President John F. Kennedy imposed an economic blockade in 1962.

This act of economic warfare remains in place to this day and has actually been tightened by Congress on more than one occasion. Cubans continue to suffer from the effects of the blockade through shortages of food, medicine, medical supplies, construction materials and much more. While Cuban medical science is very advanced, including the development of Cuba's own COVID vaccines, distribution of the vaccines has been hampered by a shortage of syringes.

U.S. economic warfare has been combined with numerous terrorist acts by Miami-based counterrevolutionaries and a long history of assassination attempts on Fidel.

It is in this context that the so-called "protests" taking place Nov. 15 in Cuba must be seen. They are a funded attack from U.S. imperialism, which has spent the past six decades creating the very shortages the "protesters" claim to be "protesting." Paid agents have manipulated social media to foment and mobilize resentment arising from the shortages.

As Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel correctly pointed out, "U.S. diplomatic officials meet frequently with leaders of the counterrevolution, to whom they provide guidance, encouragement, and logistical and financial support." (Reuters, Oct. 25)

These agents have the full backing of the U.S. capitalist media and its stooges in bogus "advocacy" groups such as Human Rights Watch.

Nevertheless, the Cuban government and mass organizations, such as the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, the Federation of Cuban Women and the Confederation of Cuban Workers, have reached out to people who have grievances in an effort to involve people in problem solving.

U.S. policy: no peace for Cuba

Either President Joe Biden or Congress could end the blockade with the stroke of a pen and allow Cuba to pursue its "peaceful aims" — food, housing, jobs, education and medical care for all under a socialist economy — without interference. But the blockade has always had bipartisan support, despite decades of repeated calls by the U.N. General Assembly to end this violation of human rights. This is because Cuba's model is in sharp contrast to the neoliberal model, which imperialism has imposed on much of Latin America: ruthless exploitation, debt servitude and brutal political repression.

The Cuban government has the right to use any means necessary, including force or legal charges, to defend its sovereignty from this latest imperialist attack.

Since Workers World Party's founding in 1959, the same year as the triumph of Cuba's Revolution, we have defended this shining socialist example from imperialist subterfuge, economic warfare and outright lies.

Today we join with others in denouncing the U.S.-orchestrated demonstrations in Cuba and in confronting reactionaries threatening the Cuban Mission to the U.N. in New York City.

We again proclaim: U.S. hands off Cuba! Long live the Cuban Revolution! ☐

WW PHOTO: SARA FLOUNDERS

People show solidarity with socialist Cuba at Mission to U.N., Nov. 15, New York City.

No Trans Liberation without Socialism— No Socialism without Trans Liberation!

By The LGBTQ+ Caucus of Workers World Party

The LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer+) Caucus of Workers World Party condemns the ongoing murders of transgender, Two-Spirit and gender-variant people. We reaffirm our solidarity with transgender, Two-Spirit and gender-variant people, as well as our dedication to bring about the total annihilation of capitalism, imperialism and the vicious oppressions these systems generate, including transphobia and transmisogyny.

STONEWALL WARRIORS
TAKE PRIDE IN FIGHTING BACK
AGAINST RACISM & BIGOTRY!!!
#BLACKLIVESMATTER - Trans Liberation!
ACT UP against Police & ICE Brutality, Capitalist Exploitation & War
BTU
Justice for Roxsana

WW PHOTO: STEVAN KIRSCHBAUM

Second Annual Boston Trans Resistance March, June 12.

The horror the systems wreak is evident: The most murders of transgender people in the U.S. in a year have already been recorded as of Nov. 4. To date in 2021: 45 transgender people have been murdered, with the majority of those killed being Black or Latinx trans women. These deaths continue a horrifying pattern that stretches back many years, and which must be stopped.

Only through the eradication of capitalism, which breeds racism as well as transmisogyny and transphobia, can we end these devastating losses. Transgender liberation built on socialism — the theory laid out by our late WWP comrade Leslie Feinberg — can be realized and maintained. There can be free and accessible housing, health care, education, jobs and community services centered around trans people, based on the recognition of the infinite spectrum of sex and gender within the human species.

As we build, we must continue organizing our communities to be safe places for trans people to live and flourish. Fostering a safe place for trans people to thrive allows trans people to fully develop the revolutionary action needed to take down this rotten system!

No Trans Liberation without Socialism and No Socialism without Trans Liberation!

Remembering...

Tyianna Alexander, 28
Samuel Edmund Damián Valentín
Bianca "Muffin" Banks, 30
Dominique Jackson, 30
Fifty Bandz, 21
Alexus Braxton, 45
Chyna Carrillo, 24
Jeffrey "JJ" Bright, 16
Jasmine Cannady, 22
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¡Presente!

Short biographies are online at tinyurl.com/nz6xtx3e.

China establishes its first clinic for transgender youth

By Devin Cole

The Children's Hospital of Fudan University, located in Shanghai, has announced the establishment of a health clinic to safely manage and maintain the gender transition of transgender youth and adolescents. (globaltimes.cn, Nov. 4)

PHOTO: VCG

China's famous transgender female artist, Jin Xing.

The clinic is a response to issues expressed by many transgender youth in China, including anxiety and depression. The clinic is multidisciplinary, combining the fields of psychology, endocrinology, urology and metabolism and offering a wide range of medical services to transgender youth. It will also have a social work department to assist trans youth with a safe and healthy transition.

China's health care system, which is centralized, socialized and universal, will guarantee that all treatment — whether therapy, hormone replacement treatment (HRT) referrals or surgery fees — will be either free or low-cost and affordable. This is similar to Cuba's revolutionary health care system, in which all services for transgender people are free and guaranteed, paid for by the government.

Meanwhile, in the U.S. ...

While the U.S. continues its red-baiting smear attacks against China's economic growth and prosperity, its transgender community continues to suffer. Thousands are unable to either afford to start HRT or to continue.

Privatized health care boasted as "superior" guarantees that mental health care or physical health care of any kind is a constant uphill battle for transgender people. Over 45 trans people have been outright murdered in the U.S. in 2021 alone, with an unaccounted death toll from medical neglect or hostility. (Human Rights Campaign, Nov. 9) State lawmakers continue to try to pass — or have actually passed — legislation that ban trans youth from even seeking treatment.

Now more than ever, the working-class LGBTQ2S+ movement in the U.S. can look to the example China sets and push for similar, humane treatment here in the U.S.

This brings the hope that trans liberation on every front can be fully recognized through an ongoing socialist revolution.

Devin Cole is president of Strive (Socialist Trans Initiative), a transgender advocacy organization in northwest Florida, and a member of the Workers World Party — Central Gulf Coast (Alabama, Florida and Mississippi) branch.

Mali's people mobilize against imperialism

By G. Dunkel

Malian protests target imperialist intervention through MINUSMA.

Although French President Emmanuel Macron has announced that his government is winding down its intervention in Mali, French imperialism is still carrying out an active policy of raids and assassinations. Mali's people are resisting.

The United States is supplying France with intelligence and logistical support and has announced it is intensifying its sanctions against Mali. AFRICOM, the U.S. military command for Africa, has had training missions in Mali for years. The U.N. has a stabilization force of 14,000 in Mali, called MINUSMA. This is a major military asset given that Mali only has 22 million people.

The Economic Community of West African States has also announced it is intensifying its economic sanctions, because Mali will not call for elections during the next six months, defying what ECOWAS has demanded. This is a very serious sanction since ECOWAS countries border much of Mali.

There are reactionary armed bands operating in western Sahel — Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger — all former French colonies — especially in the area where all three countries touch. Each armed band claims allegiance to a tendency in Islamic thought. They attack civilians, the armies of each country and French and U.S. special forces, and sometimes each other. There are also groups of smugglers — of drugs and cigarettes — and remnants of movements seeking the independence of northern and eastern Mali.

There were two significant demonstrations in Mali during the last weeks of October.

The first one, Oct. 25 in Gao, was especially significant because Gao, the last port in Mali on the Niger River, is in the area of Mali where for months there have been multiple armed attacks. Still the M5-Rally of Patriotic Forces was able to gather a peaceful march from the Monument of Martyrs to the office of the regional executive.

Alassane Guitèye, the chairperson of the M5 Youth, at the rally expressed his movement's support for the policies of the Transition Council, which has been subjected to "unprecedented pressure from the international community" against holding a national convention to reestablish and reconstitute a sovereign Mali.

Guitèye raised some local problems ranging from the supply of water and electricity to the state of roads linking Gao, which is in the eastern part of Mali, to other towns.

Brigade General Moussa Traoré, the regional executive, welcomed the march, saluted its patriotism and said he would pass along their concerns.

Another demonstration took place in Bamako five days later. Tens of thousands of people came out on the streets Oct. 30 at the call of the movement Yèréwolo (the dignified men) Standing on the Ramparts and M5.

Mohamed Ousmane Ag Mohamedoune, vice president of the Collective for the Reestablishment of Mali and member of the ruling National Transitional Council (CNT), spoke: "This historic event is an essential step in the restoration and affirmation of the national sovereignty of our country, Mali. ... We say no to the interference of the international community, in particular the interference of France through its policy of dependence, its policy of colonization and contempt." He also told ECOWAS to stop acting as an echo chamber for French politicians.

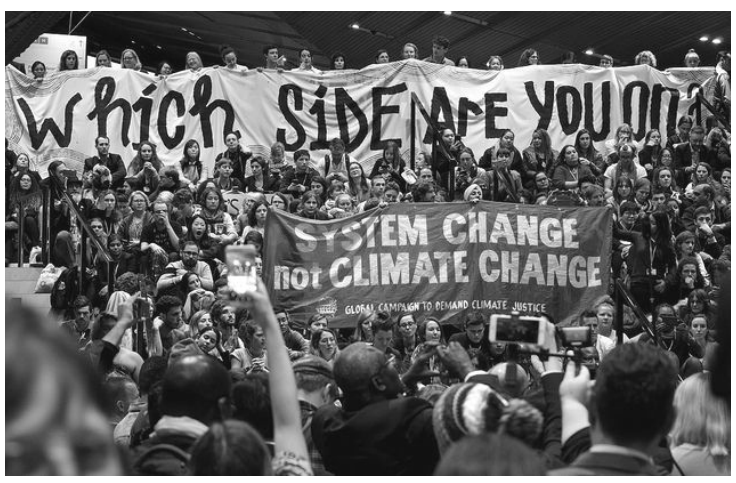
At the end of Mohamedoune's speech, the crowd chanted in support of the military officers who are running the transitional government: "Down with France! Down with French media! Down with RFI (Radio France International)! France, out! French army, out! Long live Russia!" (maliactu.net, Nov. 1)

Mali's government is trying to hire Russian military technicians. The French foreign and defense ministers just held a meeting Nov. 13 with their counterparts in Moscow and told the Russians that sending Russian troops to Mali was unacceptable to France. ☐

COP26

Youth demand change, politicians protect fossil fuel industry

By Betsey Piette



Youth demonstrate at COP26 in Glasgow, November 2021.

Two weeks of high-profile negotiations, against a background of climate catastrophes, ended Nov. 13 with little to show for the 26th "Conference of the Parties." Proposals included that "countries agree to accelerate the phasing out of coal and subsidies for fossil fuels — a potential first acknowledgment of fossil fuels' central role in the climate crisis in a U.N. agreement." However, the final agreements failed to establish concrete ways to make this happen.

Climate activists held a "funeral for COP26" in Glasgow, Scotland, on Nov. 13. These youth, whose presence was felt outside and within COP26, expressed outrage that over 500 fossil fuel lobbyists, more than the delegate count from any single country, were allowed to attend COP26. They delivered a strong message via social media: They will engage in widespread civil disobedience and do whatever else it takes to hold world leaders accountable.

U.S. politicians keep door open for fossil fuel use

The unfolding climate catastrophe should propel not just the youth but everyone to act. Yet many U.S. politicians have no intention of curbing greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). As COP26 was winding down, these politicians were opening up new markets for fossil fuels and furthering extractivism in the melting Arctic.

As existing coal mines and gas wells continue to produce GHGs, U.S. state politicians are actively legislating to forbid municipalities from limiting coal and other fossil fuels usage. On state and federal levels, politicians are clearly in the pockets of Big Oil. Sen. Joe Manchin is not alone.

Claiming to promote "energy choice," the Pennsylvania state legislature passed Senate Bill 275 in late October. The bill prohibits municipalities from restricting access to natural gas use provided by utility companies. Cities would be prohibited from adopting policies limiting methane gas use in new housing and public buildings or requiring the alternative use of sustainable, climate-friendly energy sources.

Carbon dioxide (CO_2) is the largest contributor to the climate crisis. But the extraction and use of natural gas released by fracking has accelerated the climate crisis with the release of high levels of carbon trioxide (CO_3) — 80 times as effective at trapping heat than CO_2. The "energy choice" bills offer consumers no alternative sustainable energy solutions such as wind or solar.

Across the U.S., over 70 million buildings currently rely on fossil fuels for heating and cooking. Combined, they generate 13% of GHG emissions.

Rachel Golden, with the Sierra Club's Clean Buildings Campaign explained the incentive behind gas industry lobbying: "It is important to understand that the gas industry's main revenue source from delivering gas to end users is to homes and buildings." Golden noted that homes and buildings account for 94% of gas industry revenue in Pennsylvania, higher than the U.S. average of 87%. (BCTV.org, June 14)

Preemptive legislation prohibits progress

Over the last two years, proposals passed in 20 U.S. states heading off local efforts to curb GHG emissions. Lobbyists from the American Gas Association and other energy trade groups funded these efforts.

Arizona's Republican-dominated legislature was one of the first to block localities from taking action to limit climate damage. In early 2020 they passed a law to ensure that natural gas utilities are "not subject to further regulation by a municipality."

Several California cities have passed new building codes phasing out fossil fuel use in response to former President Donald Trump's rollback of national climate protections. These measures are in jeopardy under this regressive legislative trend.

While President Joe Biden and other U.S. politicians were attending COP26 and giving lip service to youth activists' demands, on Nov. 5 the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear an appeal backed by coal companies seeking to limit the Environmental Protection Agency's power to regulate carbon emissions under the Clean Air Act.

Science denied is climate protection delayed

All these politicians' efforts to protect the energy industry involve the denial of scientific evidence by industry CEOs, who put their profits ahead of protecting the environment and public health and safety. Scientists working for the industry warned of the environmental dangers posed by fossil fuels; yet top CEOs not only refused to act, they repeatedly lied to the public, putting out disinformation.

A 1979 Exxon study revealed that burning fossil fuels "will cause dramatic environmental effects in the coming decades. ... The problem is great and urgent." (theguardian.com, June 30) Yet rather than act on the evidence, major oil companies buried the findings and created a narrative to promote the alleged benefits of their products.

For many decades, the fossil fuel industry bosses knew that the extraction and burning of fossil fuels was killing life on this planet. They knew that burning coal results in GHGs, causing 800,000 premature deaths globally each year. The major oil companies conspired to bury the findings. They promoted a counternarrative and denied the growing scientific consensus around climate science.

The energy industry is part of a global capitalist empire, which has failed to provide livable wage jobs, affordable education, housing and other means of survival. Young activists today harbor no illusions about their future under this system. Organized globally, and facing the demise of their very future, today's young activists will no longer sit idly back waiting for change. ☐

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FOTO: BRIAN WEBER

Estos trabajadores de Starbucks de Buffalo, Nueva York, anunciaron el 9 de noviembre que tres tiendas más han presentado una solicitud de elección sindical, lo que eleva el total a seis tiendas.

Obreros de Starbucks luchan contra ruptura de sindicato

Por Tom Suill
Buffalo, N.Y.

Boletín — 9 de noviembre: Tres tiendas adicionales de Buffalo han presentado ante la Junta Nacional de Relaciones Laborales para una elección sindical — duplicando el número en la zona a un total de seis. Las tres tiendas iniciales recibirán las papeletas de voto por correo el 10 de noviembre, a la espera de una decisión de la NLRB sobre cualquier intento de última hora por parte de Starbucks de retrasar más la votación.

Desde que los trabajadores de Starbucks anunciaron públicamente una campaña sindical aquí en octubre, los trabajadores se han enfrentado a una implacable represión sindical por parte de la empresa, que pretende aplastar al sindicato. Durante los últimos meses, los trabajadores han soportado amenazas, acoso, intimidación, vigilancia e incluso el cierre de las tiendas que contaban con el apoyo del sindicato durante largos periodos de tiempo.

La empresa también ha intentado aislar a los trabajadores todo lo posible, cambiando los horarios de las tiendas fuera de la disponibilidad de los trabajadores, obligando a la gente a renunciar o a trasladarse, e inundando la planta con gerentes y funcionarios corporativos, creando una atmósfera de miedo en el trabajo.

La Unión de Trabajadores de Starbucks contraatacó anunciando el 4 de noviembre que presentaría cargos por prácticas laborales desleales contra la empresa.

Danka Dragic, empleada de Starbucks desde hace dos años, dijo a Workers World: "No deberíamos tener que esperar a que las cosas vayan tan mal como en Amazon o Walmart para poder organizar un sindicato".

Los trabajadores saben que todos los trabajadores merecen un sindicato, y Starbucks -una corporación multimillonaria que pone mucho esfuerzo en enmascarar su explotación de los trabajadores con una imagen progresista- ha demostrado que cuando se trata de romper sindicatos, no son mejores que Amazon o Walmart.

Tres de las veinte tiendas en el distrito de Buffalo Starbucks han presentado una peticion por un sindicato, con un amplio apoyo de los trabajadores en otras tiendas. El 28 de octubre, la Junta Nacional de Relaciones Laborales dictaminó que la votación por correo dara lugar en esas tres tiendas del 10 de noviembre al 8 de diciembre.

En respuesta, Starbucks adaptó su estrategia antisindical, desde reuniones con público cautivo que instruía a los trabajadores para que votaran no, hasta sacar a los trabajadores de la planta durante su turno para ahuyentarlos del sindicato mediante conversaciones individuales. La empresa está añadiendo empleados de otras tiendas a la lista de votantes elegibles en las tiendas que se presentaron, en un intento flagrante de apilar el voto contra los partidarios del sindicato.

Además de la intimidación, Starbucks ha intentado comprar el apoyo de los trabajadores. Desde su fundación en 1971, Starbucks nunca ha concedido la paga por antigüedad, pero ahora ha decidido repartir esa paga extra, durante una creciente campaña sindical.

Seis de las veinte tiendas del distrito de Starbucks de Búfalo han solicitado una elección sindical, con un amplio apoyo de los trabajadores en otras tiendas.

Sólo bajo la presión de la organización de los trabajadores, Starbucks cedió en cuanto a la paga por antigüedad. Esto es sólo una pequeña muestra de lo que los trabajadores pueden ganar si se organizan juntos en sus intereses clasista compartidos.

El 6 de noviembre, Starbucks organizó lo que ellos llaman un "evento de socios", en el que participó el ex presidente ejecutivo de la empresa, Howard Schultz. Durante este evento, el multimillonario Schultz aleccionó a los trabajadores sobre la necesidad de ser "humildes".

A continuación, la barista y organizadora sindical Gianna Reeve pidió a Schultz que firmara los Principios de Elección Justa. Los trabajadores han pedido a la empresa que firme desde el principio de la campaña sindical. Starbucks se ha negado, y Schultz se negó de nuevo. La petición de Reeve fue seguida de aplausos y vítores por parte de muchos otros trabajadores presentes, que consideran que Starbucks no ha permitido a los trabajadores tener una opinión justa frente a las tácticas antisindicales solapadas de la empresa.

La opinión de los trabajadores es que hay que poner fin a la intimidación y el acoso de la dirección. La empresa Starbucks está utilizando todos los trucos del libro para aplastar al sindicato y obtener beneficios por encima de los intereses de sus trabajadores.

Pero los trabajadores de Starbucks persisten y siguen inspirando a otros trabajadores de servicios de alimentos y a los trabajadores de todas las industrias a unirse y organizarse para construir el poder en el lugar de trabajo.

El partido Worker World Party/Mundo Obrero se solidariza con Starbucks Workers United y con los trabajadores de todo el mundo en la lucha contra la explotación capitalista. ❐

Trabajadores de Kellogg's siguen en huelga

Por Martha Grevatt
Battle Creek, Mich.

La famosa frase de Tony el Tigre: "Las hojuelas azucaradas de Kellogg's son "rrricas", ha sido reformulada. Los carteles en el césped que apoyan la huelga de 1.400 trabajadores de Kellogg's muestran a un Tony enfadado con un piquete que dice "¡Kellogg's esta en hueeelga!".

Los miembros y las miembras de Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM, siglas en inglés) en Michigan, Nebraska, Pennsylvania y Tennessee están ahora en su segundo mes de huelga. El 4 de noviembre, los negociadores del sindicato anunciaron que habían rechazado la última oferta de la empresa, declarando: "La última, mejor y definitiva oferta de la empresa no consigue lo que nuestros miembros piden: una vía predecible para conseguir un empleo con todos los derechos y beneficios para todos los empleados sin concesiones".

Con las grandes cantidades de alimentos que se donan, 'no vamos a pasar hambre', explicó un huelguista. Han recibido 'mucho cariño'.

Kellogg's ha amenazado con recortar cientos de puestos de trabajo y trasladar el trabajo a México. (BCTGM.org)

Workers World/Mundo Obrero habló con miembros del Local 3-G de la BCTGM fuera de la planta de Kellogg's en Battle Creek. Explicaron que el objetivo principal de la huelga no es el aumento de los salarios, sino el fin de la escala salarial divisoria y desigual de dos niveles que paga a los trabajadores de menor antigüedad menos por el mismo trabajo realizado por los de mayor antigüedad. Sus pancartas de huelga reclaman "igualdad salarial y de beneficios" y acusan a Kellogg's de poner "los beneficios por encima de las personas".

La huelga ha sido efectiva; ningún miembro del sindicato ha cruzado la línea de piquete. Los supervisores y los empleados de la agencia temporal que trabajan en la línea no han podido dirigir la producción. Los camioneros que salen de la planta dicen a los huelguistas que sus cargas están vacías. Las condiciones inseguras creadas por la inexperiencia de los jefes han provocado hasta ahora cinco lesiones.

La estatua del tigre Tony en el exterior de la planta fue empequeñecida por un enorme "Scabby la rata" inflable que simboliza la avaricia de Kellogg's. A lo largo de los años, Scabby ha hecho acto de presencia en los piquetes sindicales de todo el país. Este Scabby fue proporcionado por el Sindicato Internacional de Trabajadores de Norteamérica Local 355 — un ejemplo de la amplia solidaridad comunitaria y laboral en esta ciudad conocida como "Ciudad de los Cereales".

Gracias a las grandes cantidades de alimentos donados, "no vamos a pasar hambre", explicó un huelguista. Han recibido "mucho cariño". Los conductores de una empresa de camiones, que conocen personalmente a los trabajadores de Kellogg's, se niegan a hacer recogidas y entregas diarias, aunque no tienen sindicato.

Aunque la BCTGM no ha convocado un boicot oficial a Kellogg's, muchos consumidores han dejado de comprar "cereal rompehuelgas".

Los trabajadores dan un golpe al capital

Los trabajadores y las trabajadoras de Kellogg's no son los únicos en huelga. Las 14 plantas del fabricante de maquinaria pesada John Deere siguen en huelga después de que los trabajadores votaran en contra de una segunda propuesta de contrato el 2 de noviembre.

Consideran que todavía no se han abordado una serie de cuestiones, entre ellas las pérdidas salariales que han sufrido debido a problemas de la cadena de suministro que escapan a su control. Antes de la frecuente escasez de piezas, se pagaba una bonificación "KIP" si los trabajadores alcanzaban una determinada cuota, pero ahora es imposible alcanzarla y la empresa se niega a ajustar la fórmula.

Al igual que Kellogg's, John Deere no quiere poner fin a la remuneración de dos niveles, vigente desde 1997. Los trabajadores "post'97" se organizan en las redes sociales y están cansados de trabajar por menos de lo que ganaban los trabajadores más antiguos -en algunos casos sus padres- hace varios contratos.

WW PHOTO: MARTHA GREVATT

Battle Creek, Michigan, 4 de noviembre.

Mientras tanto, 1.500 enfermeras de Huntington (Virginia Occidental) y 3.000 trabajadores de la Universidad de Columbia (Nueva York), que llevan cuatro años luchando por su primer contrato, se han sumado al auge de la huelga. La huelga de octubre ha pasado y la de noviembre ha comenzado, para consternación de la clase capitalista.

Si los huelguistas de Kellogg's, representados por un pequeño sindicato con 65.000 miembros en todo el país, consiguen deshacerse de los salarios de dos niveles, será una gran victoria con ramificaciones para todo el movimiento obrero.

¿De qué lado está usted? Estamos del lado de los trabajadores. ❐